

## Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 06KUALALUMPUR365, CARTOON CONTROVERSY ENVELOPS MORE MEDIA SOURCES

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g.

**#06KUALALUMPUR365.**

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06KUALALUMPUR365</a>	<a href="#">2006-03-03 06:47</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Kuala Lumpur</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://malaysia-today.net/mtcolumns/41394-wikileaks-cartoon-controversy-envelops-more-media-sources>

VZCZCXRO6253  
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM  
DE RUEHKL #0365/01 0620647  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 030647Z MAR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6060  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY  
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 0112  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 0162  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
  
C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 000365  
  
SIPDIS  
  
SIPDIS  
  
E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/03/2016  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [KPAO](#) [MY](#)  
SUBJECT: CARTOON CONTROVERSY ENVELOPS MORE MEDIA SOURCES  
  
REF: A. KUALA LUMPUR 313

Classified By: PolCouns Thomas F. Daughton for reasons 1.4 b, d

11. (C) SUMMARY: For the third time in a month, the Malaysian government has suspended publication of a daily newspaper that printed an image of a Prophet Muhammad cartoon. The government-controlled New Straits Times (NST) managed to avoid punishment, however, after it issued an "unreserved apology" for publishing a syndicated cartoon that poked fun at the global Prophet Muhammad caricature controversy (ref A). Meanwhile, two of Malaysia's four free-to-air television channels issued apologies for inadvertently broadcasting images of Muhammad cartoons in early February. The opposition Islamic party PAS and several religious leaders continue to fan the cartoon flames, despite efforts by the government and mainstream media to put the controversy behind them. PAS tried to organize cartoon protests on March 3 in mosques in each of Malaysia's 13 state capitals, while the northern state of Perak's government-funded religious council website posted an on-line poll (later withdrawn) asking readers whether Muslims should "hunt and kill, or launch war" against those who "insult the Prophet Muhammad." Prime Minister Abdullah has signaled that the government will continue to monitor media coverage of racial and religious issues to ensure that GOM-defined constraints are not violated. At least in the near term, editors will likely restrict their coverage to news that is "print to fit" within the GOM's evolving boundaries of acceptability. End Summary.

A Third Newspaper Falls Through Thin Cartoon Ice...

-----

12. (C) The internal security ministry suspended publication of the Chinese-language Berita Petang Sarawak newspaper for two weeks starting February 26 in response to its February 4 publication of a "seditious" photo of a man reading a newspaper in which one of the Danish cartoons was clearly visible. Berita Petang Sarawak became the third newspaper to have its publishing permit suspended over publication of Prophet Muhammad cartoons. Earlier in February, the government suspended the Chinese-language Guang Ming Daily for two weeks for an infraction similar to that committed by Berita Petang Sarawak, and the prime minister, acting in his dual role as internal security minister, indefinitely suspended publication of the Sarawak Tribune for reprinting one of the caricatures (ref B).

... While Another Skates Around It

-----

13. (C) After coming under fire for its February 20 publication of a syndicated cartoon alluding to the Danish caricature controversy (ref A), Malaysia's second-largest English-language daily, the New Straits Times, issued a front-page, "unreserved apology" on February 24. Within hours of the paper's appearance, PM Abdullah stated that the government would take no further action against the NST, which is owned by the ruling UMNO party. The PM's decision to forgo action against the NST did not deter about 500 protesters from holding a protest at NST's Kuala Lumpur offices following Friday prayers on February 24. Supporters of PAS and of Anwar Ibrahim's Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) waved signs and shouted slogans that referred to the NST editors as "bastards" and agents of Israel and Singapore. In a full-page analysis of its cartoon crisis, the NST's editors wrote on February 25, "That is PAS. That is Keadilan. In the name of Islam, they perform prayers and march from a holy place carrying placards that call people bastards. What is so Islamic about pre-judging others and slandering them without any evidence?" PKR leaders later distanced themselves from the demonstration, calling it "disgraceful" and claiming they had no role in organizing it.

Offensive Cartoons Also Spotted on TV

-----

14. (C) In its adroitly worded February 24 "apology," the NST called the attention of the internal security ministry to several television broadcasts that had aired images of the banned Muhammad cartoons in early February. According to media reports, all four of Malaysia's free-to-air television channels (state-owned RTM1 and RTM2, and UMNO-controlled TV3 and NTV7) broadcast images of at least one Muhammad cartoon. The NST's move was widely viewed as a shot at the information minister, who led the charge against the paper's editorial staff over its syndicated cartoon. The government is currently reviewing the allegations and is expected to decide soon whether any punishment of the stations is warranted. For its part, TV3 tried to head off a reprimand by airing an apology to its viewers on February 28 for "accidentally" broadcasting a news segment that showed one of the controversial images "for 13 seconds." The channel also sent a written explanation of its actions to the energy, water and communications ministry. NTV7 did likewise on March 1. The two state-owned channels, RTM1 and RTM2, have not yet acknowledged that they aired footage of a Prophet Muhammad cartoon.

#### Other Cartoon-Related Developments

-----

15. (C) The official, state-funded website of the religious council of Perak (a large state in northern peninsular Malaysia) recently posted an on-line, Malay-language poll asking readers to choose the most appropriate action to be taken against those who "insult the Prophet Muhammad." The poll allowed readers to choose among six answers, including, "hunt and kill them or launch war against them." The on-line poll was pulled from the website March 2 after a disparaging March 1 report about it by Internet-based news provider Malaysiakini. The poll had attracted little public attention and only about 175 "voters," 22% of whom supported the most extreme response.

16. (C) PAS planned to organize further protests against the Muhammad cartoons on March 3 at designated mosques in each of Malaysia's 13 state capitals. An intervening decision by the government to raise gasoline prices (ref C) changed the theme of the protests, however, and PAS representatives told us late March 2 that demonstrations would occur only in Kuala Lumpur and three state capitals.

#### Comment

-----

17. (C) Both the government and the mainstream media want to see the end of the cartoon saga, which has absorbed considerable time and attention here over the past month. The "guilty" newspapers have been quickly punished and news coverage has moved on to other issues. The TV broadcasts that displayed the Muhammad cartoons are now more than three weeks old; any punishment of the channels at this point will likely be mild, swift and meted out with little fanfare. PAS and a few Islamic religious leaders have tried to keep the controversy on life support, mostly in a bid to rally political support, but new issues arising daily are making that increasingly difficult.

18. (C) The cartoon controversy has played out in the larger context of a slow relaxation of press controls that began after Abdullah Badawi took office in late 2003. In order to build a general air of believability and be commercially competitive -- both with each other and with the Internet -- the government-controlled media have attempted to provide increasingly objective and complete reporting on national stories. The public demand for higher quality news reporting has become increasingly risky for government-controlled media organizations to satisfy, however, since highly sensitive racial and religious issues typically provide the subtext for the most provocative and best-selling stories. The cartoon controversy prompted Prime Minister Abdullah to wield one of the government's most potent legal weapons for controlling the media in order to signal that boundaries still exist on press freedom when it comes to racial and religious issues.

For the near future, we expect news editors to respond by restricting their coverage of such issues to news that's "print to fit" within the GOM's slowly evolving notions of acceptability.

LAFLEUR